

## Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics

"Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" introduces Bakhtin's concept of **chronotope**. This essay applies the concept in order to further demonstrate the distinctive quality of the novel.<sup>[26]</sup> The word *chronotope* literally means "time space" and is defined by Bakhtin as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."<sup>[27]</sup> For the purpose of his writing, an author must create entire worlds and, in doing so, is forced to make use of the organizing categories of the real world in which he lives. For this reason *chronotope* is a concept that engages reality.<sup>[28]</sup>

**Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin** (**Russian**: Михайл Михайлович Бахтін, pronounced [mʲɪxəl'ɪl mʲɪ'xajləvʲɪtɕ bəx'tʲɪn]) (November 17, 1895, Oryol – March 7, 1975) was a **Russian philosopher, literary critic, semiotician**<sup>[1]</sup> and scholar who worked on **literary theory**, ethics, and the **philosophy of language**. His writings, on a variety of subjects, inspired scholars working in a number of different traditions (**Marxism**, **semiotics**, **structuralism**, religious criticism) and in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, history, philosophy, anthropology and psychology. Although Bakhtin was active in the debates on aesthetics and literature that took place in the **Soviet Union** in the 1920s, his distinctive position did not become well known until he was rediscovered by Russian scholars in the 1960s.

Chronotope: "formally constitutive category of literatureIn the **philosophy of language** and **philology**, **chronotope** is a term coined by **M.M. Bakhtin** to describe the way time and space are described by language, and, in particular, how literature represents them.<sup>[1]</sup> The term itself (**Russian**: Хронотоп), from **Greek**: χρόνος ("time") and τόπος ("space"), can be literally translated as "time-space." Bakhtin developed the term in his 1937 essay "**Russian**: Формы времени и хронотопа в романе", published in English as "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel."<sup>[2]</sup>

"The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic."

Of the road "...a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement."

### The Road

"Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course: "the course of a life" "to set out on a new course," "the course of history" and so on; varied and multileveled are the ways in which road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time."

### Alien World

“the road is always one that passes through familiar territory, and not through some exotic alien world.”

### **The Castle**

“Toward the end of the seventeenth century in England a new territory for novelistic events is constituted and reinforced in the so-called “Gothic” or “black” novel – the castle.”

“the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, in furnishings, weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives and in the particular human relationships involving dynastic primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights.”

“The organic cohesion of spatial and temporal aspects and categories in the castle (and its environs), the historical intensity of this chronotope, is what had determined its productivity as a source for images at different stages in the development of the historical novel.”

### **Parlors and Salons**

“In the novels of Stendhal and Balzac a fundamentally new space appears in which novelistic events may unfold – the space of parlors and salons (in the broad sense of the word).”

“From a narrative and compositional point of view, this is the place where encounters occur (no longer emphasizing their specifically random nature as did meetings “on the road” or “in an alien world”). In salons and parlors the webs of intrigue are spun...this is where dialogues happen.”

“Most important in all this is the weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life, with the secrets of the boudoir; the interweaving of petty, private intrigues with political and financial intrigues, the interpenetration of state with boudoir secrets,, of historical sequences with the everyday and biographical sequences.”

### **Provincial town**

“In Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* the provincial town serves as the locus of action.”

“Such towns are the locus for cyclical everyday time. Here there are no events, only “doings that constantly repeat themselves”

“The markers of this time are simple, crude, material, fused with the everyday details of specific locales, with the quaint little houses and rooms of the town, with the sleepy streets, the dust and flies, the club, the billiards and so on and on.”

“Novelists use it as an ancillary time, one that may be interwoven with other noncyclical temporal sequences or used merely to intersperse such sequences; it often serves as a contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event.”

### **Threshold**

“...is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life...”

“In Dostoevsky, for example, the threshold and related chronotopes – those of the staircase, the front hall and corridor, as well as the chronotopes of the street and square that extend those spaces into the open air – are the main places of action in his works, places where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals, epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man.”

“In this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous”

End

“What is most obvious is [chronotopes] meaning for narrative. They are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel.”

“We cannot help but be strongly impressed by the representational importance of the chronotope. Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible” and “...emerges as a center for concretizing representation...”

Questions: What about buildings like Mercedes Benz, and Yokohama, which have a continuous space? This leads into our responsive environments, what happens when space can change, can it dictate narrative/react to?

“chronotopicity of the poetic images conceived as an image of temporal art, one that represents spatially perceptible phenomena in their movement and development.”